

SOVIET HINTS SHIFT ON A MISSILE PACT

Now Indicates Willingness
to Talk With U.S. to Avert
Costly Defense Race

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Feb. 15—Pravda hinted today that the Soviet Union was willing to enter serious negotiations with the United States aimed at averting a costly race to install antimissile defense systems.

The Communist party newspaper gave the hint in a discussion of recent progress toward a treaty to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Reporting that the United States was contemplating projects for the installation of an antimissile system that would cost about \$40-billion, Pravda said:

"Speaking at a news conference in London, Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin declared that the Soviet Government was ready to discuss the problem of averting a new arms race, both in offensive and defensive weapons."

Kosygin Cool to Proposal

Pravda's interpretation of Mr. Kosygin's remarks last Thursday struck Western observers here as indicating a possible change in Moscow's attitude toward the issue of halting work in antimissile systems.

The Premier had declined in London to give a direct answer to a question about the feasibility of a moratorium on antimissile projects, but he seemed to be cool to such a proposal, which has been advanced by the United States.

"I think that defensive systems, which deter an attack, cannot be considered as the causes of arms races, but rather represent a factor preventing the annihilation of people," the Premier said. "Perhaps a defensive system will cost more than an offensive system, but it is intended not for the murdering of people but for the saving of human lives."

Johnson Appeal to Moscow

President Johnson, in his State of the Union Message Jan. 11, noted evidence that the Soviet Union had already deployed a limited antimissile defense system to protect Moscow and said:

"We have the duty to slow down the arms race between us, in both conventional and nuclear weapons and defenses. Any additional race would impose on our peoples, and on all mankind, an additional waste of resources with no gain in security to either side.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara strongly opposes

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the deployment of antimissile missiles, contending that the heavy expenditure would soon be nullified by improvements in offensive missiles. He favors a strategy based on the deterrent of offensive missiles that could destroy an enemy despite its defense network.

The Soviet Union, involved in costly programs to expand and modernize industry and agriculture, would be hard pressed, Western observers here say, to allocate the many billions of rubles required to deploy an antimissile system. However, the traditional emphasis of Soviet military strategy has been on defense, and it is believed that this attitude is behind the work on a limited antimissile system.

Even if Moscow should desire to agree with the United States on a freeze on antimissile deployments, a new factor has been introduced into Soviet military strategy by the steadily worsening relations with Communist China as it seeks to perfect nuclear weapons.

The Pravda article today was critical of China's hostility to a treaty prohibiting the spread of nuclear weapons.

Recalling that Peking had declared, at the time of its fifth nuclear explosion in December, that its nuclear weapons program was intended "strictly for defensive purposes," Pravda said:

"It seems that now is the right time to affirm this declaration. The support by China of a treaty prohibiting the spread of nuclear weapons would lend credence to its declaration."

The Pravda article also criticized the position of West Germany on the treaty. If West Germany dropped its opposition to the terms of such a treaty, the article said, "then the road to the conclusion of the treaty can be considered open."

West Germany has expressed concern that the treaty would hamper the development of nuclear power for peaceful purposes. Last week, however, Foreign Minister Willy Brandt said in New York that Bonn was willing to renounce the right to nuclear explosions, even for peaceful purposes.

U.S.-European Discord

By JOHN W. FINNEY

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 15—Differences are developing between the United States and some of its European allies over

the safeguards to insure observance of the projected treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

The question is expected to come to the fore when the 17-nation Geneva disarmament conference reconvenes Tuesday. In private discussions since the five-year-old talks recessed last August, the United States and the Soviet Union have reached general agreement on the terms for the treaty, but they still are far apart on Article III, providing for safeguards to insure enforcement.

The two sides have agreed that there must be safeguards, which, through periodic international inspections, would insure that the fissionable materials produced in atomic power plants were not being used for weapons.

The controversial question, which divides the Western allies more than it does the United States and the Soviet Union, is who should administer the safeguards.

The Soviet Union, in its first major concession to the concept of international inspection in an arms-control agreement, says that the responsibility should be given to the International Atomic Energy Agency, an independent organization that has developed a system for inspecting atomic power plants.

The United States agrees in principle that there should be a single inspection system, administered by the Vienna-based agency. But the European Atomic Energy Community has its own system for its six member states—France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. Some of the Euratom members say that, for political and technical reasons, they do not want the international agency intruding upon their jurisdiction.

In West Germany the press has been maintaining that international inspection would open the door to "industrial espionage" by Soviet inspectors.

Officials of the United States Atomic Energy Commission replying to the European doubts, say that the inspected country can determine the nationality of the inspector sent by the international agency. Furthermore, agency inspections have proved to be relatively routine, with the inspector having no access to secrets of design.

A compromise proposal emerging in the Johnson Administration is a transition period in which Euratom would be able to continue inspection in its member countries while working out a relationship with the international agency.